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ndembo, a woman who is pregnant for the first time;[1] *kacembere*, a woman who has one or two children; *mjembere*, a woman who has three or four children, and lastly, *akolwe*, a woman who is past child-bearing age.

The information which I have been able to collect on abortifacients and contraceptives suggests that they are not used by married people merely to prevent their having more children, but that they are used by people who wish to avoid pregnancies which would be embarrassing, for example, by a woman whose husband is a labour migrant. To what extent the abortifacients and contraceptives are efficacious I cannot say; some, I know for certain, rely on a magical principle, for example, the medicated cord worn by a man during intercourse. On the other hand, the abortifacients taken orally may have some active ingredient.

A barren woman or an impotent man is regarded with some embarrassment and the marriage sureties (*acinamangosuw*) of a childless couple will go to considerable trouble and expense consulting diviners and leeches in an attempt to make their wards productive. Childless couples are regarded as not fully adult and are treated in a patronizing way by those who have borne children. Since a man may marry other wives, barrenness in a woman is a cause of sorrow to her husband, but is not in itself a ground for divorce. Where the man is impotent, however, the woman may divorce him on this ground, though she usually takes a paramour and forces her husband to an action for damages which automatically leads to a divorce because it is the usual practice in these cases for the court to ask the woman if she wants to be divorced from her husband.

In contrast to the satisfaction shown at the birth of a child is the sense of awe evinced when a child is still-born or the woman miscarries. The Yao do not distinguish between still-births and abortions, both events being known by the word *kwasanga*. This is a verb and refers to the process of abortion; there is no term for the dead foetus itself. I made no attempt to enumerate miscarriages and still-births because they are supposed to be due to breaches of sexual taboos on the part of the husband and wife, and interviewees were naturally reluctant to mention them. Miscarriages and still-births are greatly feared, and the woman is considered to be in a very dangerous condition until she and her husband have carried out a ritual purification. Should a man have intercourse with a woman who has miscarried and not yet been purified he will contract a disease called *lwaso* which is believed to be invariably fatal. Still-born children or aborted foetuses are buried in a hole dug with sharpened sticks in the bush by the women, whereas children who are born alive and die afterwards are buried in the graveyard in graves dug by men with hoes. The burial spots of still-born babies or aborted foetuses are marked with a stone or broken pottery, since it is believed that to step on them will induce an illness.

The concern of the interested kin-groups is shown in the child-birth procedure. Birth normally takes place in a hut in the presence of the older female relatives of the woman and the female representatives of the man. The husband's representatives are necessary because the Yao, like many other Central African peoples, believe that an adulterine child will not be born to the woman unless she confesses (*kupaca*) the name of the genitor. If she persists in concealing the identity of the genitor, they

[1] *ndembo* — elephant, hence ivory. The terms *litibo* and *ndembo* here both refer to the ivory beads traditionally worn by the woman in the pregnancy initiation ceremony.